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ABSTRACT

Designed by a committee of the Speech Communication Association to assist in planning a conference in intercultural communication, this outline defines the field, delineates topics for presentation, and furnishes a general outline for a volume which will be considered the final product. Cultural objectivity is established by insuring participation of representatives of various societies rather than by a culturally impartial organization of topics and conferences. Contents of the outline represent a theoretical analysis of intercultural communication, a review of its empirical accomplishments, and a forecast of the future. Each section begins with a review of the central issue of the section, proceeds with a general definition of the level of theory involved, and concludes with a miscellany of topics passed over as systematic points. (EE)

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OUTLINE OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Edward C. Stewart

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The Outline has been prepared to serve as a map for the loosely structured field of intercultural communication. It will be used to assist in planning a conference in intercultural communication which will be staged by a committee of the Speech Communication Association (SCA). The Outline has been reviewed and modified by readers and by members of the committee. It will serve to define some fifteen to twenty topics, and once these are selected, writers will be identified and asked to write original papers. A second conference will be held, with a broader audience participating as observers, to produce a final synthesis of the papers. The results should be a systematic volume in the field of intercultural communication.

This procedure was adopted to avoid producing papers which cannot be integrated into an overview, or that cannot be contained within the boundaries of the field. The Outline should therefore define the field, serve to select topics, provide structure to the conferences and furnish a general outline for a volume which will emerge as the final product. Its content should represent a theoretical analysis of intercultural communication, a review of its empirical accomplishments and a forecast of the future.

Although the Outline is general--it is proposed as a map--it rules out some topics and establishes a direction. Communication, rather than culture is the cornerstone; thus the Outline begins with the basic concepts of communication.

In developing this Outline, it has been borne in mind that work in the field of cultural communication should require the participation of persons from different cultures. Thus it has been planned to maintain the participation of American writers at twenty-five percent with the remainder drawn from other parts of the world. An analogous objective was adopted for the design of the Outline. It was intended to draw up a map of the field which avoided cultural biases, but this objective could not be attained since the document is deductive, analytical, abstract and in these and other features it unquestionably is culturally loaded. (The ideas intercultural and even communication already convey cultural implications.) Cultural objectivity will be established by insuring participation of representatives of various societies rather than by a culturally impartial organization of topics and conference.

The introduction of each section of the Outline begins with a review of the central issue of the section, procedes with a general definition of the level of theory involved, and ends with a miscellany of topics passed over as systematic points. In some cases these latter topics represent correctives for the cultural bias of the Outline, in other cases, traditional areas in communication which were considered peripheral systematic concepts. (For example, the mass media is included as a topic under applications to education.) Although both traditional and culturally specific subjects may be omitted, their content and concepts can be distributed over the Outline and accommodated within its categories.

I. Basic Concepts

Writers in the field of information and communication theory refer to the paradox that communication is concerned with what is shared, but if senders and receivers share too much, there is no need for communication. Having mentioned the paradox, most writers move on to stress the shared aspects of communication and neglect the non-shared. An analogous situation exists in the field of psychology, with the "similarity paradox" in learning theory. In perception (Gestalt psychology) similarity is a principle and occurs in partial contradiction to the principles of holism and differentiation.

Practitioners of communication, particularly those in the intercultural field, use similarity and differences to structure their thinking with the stress usually falling on similarity. Thus they speak of communication based on "universals", "shared qualities" and "likenesses"; successful communication implies agreement or conformity; and theories of differences should be avoided, but relevant and concrete differences presented. In some cultures, Greek for instance, there appear to be a greater systematic stress on differences than in American society and communication based on differences is readily accepted.

In the field of intercultural communication, the balance is restored between similarity and differences in the paradox of communication, which is examined under conditions of differences defined as cultural.

A. Similarity in Communication

1. The principle of similarity in the process of communication
2. Kinds of similarity that should exist between sender and receiver

B. Differences in Communication

1. Kinds of differences in communication

2. Alternatives to the concept of differences

a. Contrasts

b. Dimensions

c. Dialectics--a "process" replacing more "static" concepts

C. Analysis of similarity and differences

The pervasiveness of thinking in communication undergirded by similarity and differences suggests that practice in the field preserves a phenomenon which has received scant analysis, and for intercultural communication, differences represents the key concept. Analysis of it, however, incurs the risks of either triviality or empty abstractions. The level of analysis (how much and how abstract the difference) is a critical issue.

The significance of using differences rather than similarities may be no more than the use of dimensions rather than categories. Contrast would imply analysis of "ranges" on a dimension rather than the "comparison" of two categories. Thus stress on differences, conceptualized as contrasts on dimensions, separates intercultural communication from communication with stress on similarities conceptualized as categories. (The notion of intercultural communication automatically includes the necessity of comparisons and contrasts in all statements.)

II. Theory of Communication in Intercultural Communication

This section is devoted to material drawn from information theory, linguistics, social psychology, semiotics, perception, ethology, physiology, philosophy, sociology, esthetics and language. The Outline avoids a roll call of the sciences and arts; instead it turns to each to extricate the

principles, concepts and contents which seem relevant for intercultural communication.

One of the guiding themes in the section should be to determine the process and structure of communication and to identify those principles, laws and methods which characterize communication as an independent field. Efforts along this direction such as those grounded in information theory, symbolism, or in some other model, do not present a coherent and comprehensive theory of communication. Thus this section of the outline will probably contain "chunks" or empirical problems in its final form treated at a systematic and theoretical level.

A. Components of Communication (adapted from Hymes)

1. Codes--sets or systems of symbols

a. Symbols--"intentional representations that stand for something else"

b. Verbal Codes (languages)

(1) Variant and invariant factors in languages

(2) Transformational grammars

(3) Functions of language in social control

(a) control functions with children, adults

(b) word taboos, secret and sacred words

(4) Analysis of functions should be confined to the verbal code to avoid overlap with analysis of functions of communication below.

c. Non-verbal codes, semiotics

d. Patterns of Codes

The view that a code such as language is not a meaningful concept, instead, the code (language) should be considered only as applied in patterns ("chunks") in a given context.

2. Participants in Communication

The customary analysis of the participants into sender and receiver should not obscure the assumption that communication is a process. Analysis of receiver and sender provides the entry into intercultural communication and hence will be elaborated under III. Cultural differences will be defined as properties of the sender and the receiver. An important focus for analysis is the disparity between the sender and the receiver in the process of communication: the receiver listens for a "sound", but the sender emits "words".

3. Form or Shape of Messages

a. Style

Rhetoric

b. Levels of Communication

The issue may be indicated as two levels of communication: overt and covert; or manifest and latent; or meaningful and perceptual levels.

In the area of the arts, music, painting and sculpture, the perceptual aspects of form in sound and vision are systematically linked to the overt meaning of the "message". This perceptual aspect receives treatment as the "code" of esthetics.

Drawing on painting to illustrate, communication may be considered at two levels simultaneously with three possible relationships existing between the two levels. In the first, the painterly qualities of a painting (color, design, brightness, etc.) communicate the same or similar message as the content of the painting. The two levels may on the other hand communicate contrasting messages, or the relationship between

the two may be ambiguous. (A similar analysis could be conducted for the relationship of verbal messages versus paralanguage, kinesics, etc.)

4. Channels of Communication

   a. The properties of the modalities: vision, audition, touch, pain,kinesthesis, temperature, smell and taste.

   b. Multiple channels of communication

The combination of vision and audition in television provides the most obvious multiple channels of communication, but there is the important example of perception itself in both vision and audition combining with the content or the symbols of the message to provide content as well as form in the message. An example which makes the point is onomatopoeia, in which the sound as well as the word conveys meaning.

   (1) Synesthesia--an example of multiple channels of imagery.

   (2) Perceptual forms such as number forms in which the numbers are imagined to exist in space with distinctive forms, thus fusing concepts and perceptual qualities.

5. Setting or Context for Communication

   a. The communicative qualities of the roles of the sender and receiver

   b. The event in communication may be considered as the unit of communication

   c. Environmental, ecological or other factors in the setting which affect communication.

B. Functions of Communication

1. Referential--transmit information, knowledge
2. Emotive--expressiveness
3. Conative--intentional, motivational
4. Poetic--fusion of concrete perception and abstraction
5. Phatic--belongingness, affiliation
6. Metalingual--communication about communication
7. Metaphysical--world view

C. Concepts

1. Structural Concepts

a. Information Theory

(1) The theory is based on several concepts such as information, entropy, feedback, etc., which need to be developed.

(2) Suppression of information--The concept of information is defined to include potential "information" as well as that which is communicated. Thus meaning is defined in terms of the message and also in terms of all potential messages. For any one message transmitted, there is simultaneously suppression of information, which can be inferred by appeal to the total domain of information from which the message was drawn. Information theory deals with the phenomenon systematically. The idea, suppression of information, can be broadened to include assumptions in communication and other explicit phenomena; some indicated below.

(a) Suppression of information in the visual modality; in pictures, images, etc.

(b) Social logic and other work from Garfinkel and others in ethnomethodology.

b. Linguistics

Phoneme, morpheme, grammar, etc.

c. Physiological principles

What are the qualities of the nervous system, the brain and the process of perception which impose limits or invariances on communication?

(1) Forms and shapes imposed on messages by physiological principles (i.e. what are the impositions, if any, of the process of abstraction occurring with visual stimuli between the retina and the projection on the brain? What are the implications of the works of Kuffler and others?)

(2) Problems of concreteness and abstraction

(3) Problems of the particular and the universal, especially in language

(4) The question of the two-term, three-term, or n-term logic; what are the contributions of physiology for these questions and what are the ramifications for communication? Process, is it a concept that evades two-term logic without embracing three or n-term logic?

2. Functional Explanations and Principles

a. Balance principles of dissonance, congruity feedback and the negative homeostatis of Weiner

b. Sequencing (diachronic) effects of communication and effects of association in visual modalities

c. Important empirical area: dissonance theory and research

3. Mechanical and computer models of intercultural communication

D. Processing and Encoding-Decoding of Messages

1. Perception

2. Storing, memory storage processes

3. Retrieving

How does the process of retrieving take place? What are the operative principles; is retrieval based on chance? Is there choice involved? What are the qualities of retrieval affected by the modality of the information stored which is retrieved?

4. The impact of stored information on attitudes, images and eventually on behavior.

III. Cultural Aspects

Culture is defined at the outset as predispositions of the individual shared with only some others and which govern behavior. Presumably, therefore, a causal system can be described between the actions and the predispositions of the individual. In this section the framework in which the analysis of the individual's culture may be carried out is suggested.

A second definition of culture is given as the ambience or the system of predispositions derived from demographic variables and shared by its members. This perspective discards the point of view of the individual and implies a different set of cause and effect relationships at the level of a population.

The status of theory is not entirely satisfactory leading to some incongruities. Thus this section might stress certain empirical problems and redefine them at a systematic and theoretical level. (The term culture is used loosely below for convenience in communication.)

A. Method for Analyzing Culture

1. Componential Analysis and its assumptions; emic and etic analyses
2. Definition of Cultural and cultural universals
   a. Individual level--the work of Piaget, Maslow, etc.
   b. Other levels including the work of Kluckhohn and Levi-Strauss. Particular attention should be given to structuralism.

B. Components of Culture

1. Quantum of the Culture and the cultural quantum of communication (In some groups the concept of communication is not as favored as in others. Does this imply a different unit of communication or a different function for it?) What is the interface between the individual and the culture?

2. Perception

The work on color terms is particularly appropriate for elucidating perception and other aspects of culture. Also, the work on different styles of perception is significant.

3. Patterns of Thinking. Includes "causation" and "free will"

4. Functions of Language

The functions of language will vary from culture to culture, group to group, etc. There are also qualities of the language which influence its functions in a given setting which should be examined. For instance:

   a. Language: Learned or natural phenomenon (Chomsky)
   b. The positive or negative loading of adjectives and of evaluations in a given language; the lexical markings
   c. The degree to which speakers use their language in accord with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. (Culture classified according to functions of language.)

e. "Elaborated" and "restricted" codes as studied by Bernstein

5. Assumptions

Deep, implicit or silent assumptions. Assumptions may be treated as suppressed information in information theory. The organization and substance of assumptions in communication will not be treated here; some important assumptions are listed without intent to be systematic:

a. Forms of thinking: rules of evaluation, dialectics, and the apocalyptic or revolutionary mode of thought

b. Assumptions and expectations of change

c. Semantics of socialism

d. Assumptions of spatial imperatives, territorialism; the sense of space and place

6. Values

There are various analyses of values which could serve to expand this category. An important idea can be presented here; it links with the suppression of information. Under conditions of equality, there is social pressure to communicate and thereby participate. It is important in the cultural area to stress the value of freedom not to communicate.

7. Role

a. The impact of grammar of roles on communication

b. A huge portion of literature on small groups, reference groups, can be included here

c. Stress on freedom not to communicate combined with role gives apopathetic behavior, generalized influence of presence of others on communication

8. Events

The influence on communiation of the setting, of the ecological conditions

C. Function of Culture

To define reality, to provide normative rules, etc.

D. Culture at the level of demographic variables (How individual is integrated with institutions)

Although the definition of culture as the predispositions of the individual seems to be the most appropriate for intercultural communication, the definition neglects the bonds which exist among people who compose the same cultural group. There is the need to consider behavior occurring in political, sociological or a generalized cultural setting. It is suggested that this level can be treated as the ambience of the setting for intercultural communication.

The necessity of the Darwinian level of definition may be indicated by the following hypothetical case:

It is conceivable possible to locate two Americans and one Chinese of such natures that one American and the Chinese would be very similar in personal predispositions, more alike than the two Americans. Thus both the Chinese and the one American should be classified under the same culture, while the other American should be assigned to a second culture. How can the two Americans be assigned to the same culture without recourse to physical biographical and other data--which implicitly are used to determine cultural affiliations which ignore the terms employed for analyzing culture and cultural differences?

E. Culture at the level of institutions

(This level is different from the one adopted in this outline; it represents a sociological level of analysis and of societal universals. These are: Economic, Political, Religion, Education, and the Family.)

F. Culture of Technology

(This topic also represents an alternative to the general direction of the outline.)

1. Information overload
2. Urbanization
3. Values underlying technology
   a. Changes in Great Britain during the 19th Century
   b. Contrast between the values in the U.S.A. and in Japan
4. Development of universal cultural of scientific-urban technological values
   a. How suitable are present American values for the future?
   b. What are the nature of changes in American society of the last ten years in the areas of technology, information, communication, etc.? (Changes in the technical-communication area)

G. Culture analyzed at the level of history

(This level is divergent from the direction of the outline; proposes analysis of culture as "civilization".)

IV. Intercultural Communication

In this section the theory of communication is combined with the cultural components. The results should be the variations in communication caused by the cultures of the sender and receiver.

The problem of what existing cultures should be used to examine the process of intercultural communication has to be settled. The choices may be determined by the cultural background of the selected writers; it may be chosen on some other basis which is judged significant such as politics, economics, etc., or the choice of cultures may be arbitrary and made on a basis of convenience.

The use of the method, componential analysis, suggests employing contrast cultures as the vehicles for content. The suggestions below are built on contrast cultures.

A. Contrast Cultures

1. The set of values found at the extreme ends of dimensions used to analyze cultures are called contrast cultures
2. Can contrast cultures be considered analogoues to transformational or to generative grammars in language?

B. Critical Components of Intercultural Communication

The components of communication should reflect the differences of contrast cultures. For practical purposes, certain of the components of culture represent more critical differences in communication. A combination of critical components from communication and from culture yields several empirical or problem areas, as follows:

1. Interfaces in Communication

The relationship, or the rapport, between sender and receiver may be referred to as the interface. At least three interfaces should be considered:

a. Sympathy--based on similarity of sender and receiver

b. Empathy--based on differences but congruent objectives

c. Trust--too vast and complex a topic to be defined here; trust should be considered at two levels at least:

(1) personal

(2) institutional or organizational

2. Patterns of Thinking

a. Prevalence of dichotomy as shaper of thinking and decisions

b. Universalism-Particularism in patterns of thinking

c. Forms of evaluation

3. The "as if" strategy in communication

a. Simulation as a principle

b. Games

c. Implied Observer-Agents as patterns of thinking and communication

d. The arts as "as if" strategies

4. Orientations to Action

Decision-making and problem-solving

5. Cultural Styles of Communication (Private and Public Rules)

a. Topics of conversation according to event-structures

b. Rules for the display of emotions

c. Rules of evidence

d. Reserves of Meaning: diachronic, synchronic, symbolic and abstract

C. Functions of Communication

Differences in the stress and in the nature of function of communication in different contrast cultures. (Combine II.B. and IV.A.)

V. Training and Applications

(Education, training and influencing)

The field of intercultural communication has always been closely linked to applications in the field. The field itself arose from the need of practitioners to cope with and work in a strange culture.

In this section, the problems of education, training and influencing are raised. Some various programs are reviewed. The word "training" is used to refer to that process, while "student" is used to refer to the receiver of the communication.

A. Training

1. Kinds of Training

   a. Education--refers to a process and implies changes in attitudes and in knowledge

   b. Training--refers primarily to changes in skills and hence to specific applications

   c. Orientation--refers to adding of information to the repertoire of the student with implication of application and practicality

2. Definition of training objectives (the changes to be brought about in the student)

The objectives of training represent an issue which has been widely and heatedly debated. In the most general sense the training change of the student refers to learning an integration of cognitive and experimental factors. This view includes reference to the results as well as to the process of learning. The issues may be analyzed along the terms below.

a. Awareness--the role of the student's cultural self-awareness in bringing about effective learning and performance

b. Training for communication interfaces

The creation, empathy, sympathy and trust for members of other cultures. The roles of introjection and of projection in education and in performance.

c. Cultural adaptation

The modification of the student's own cultural values, etc., for the purpose of facilitating adaptation to other societies. (What adaptation should be made? What are the limits consonant with "freedom"?)

d. Predisposing the student to action and performance

(1) Predisposing to action (action learning)

(2) Predisposing to knowledge (learning learning)

3. Means of Training

(General strategies rather than specific methods)

a. Does training impart novel new ways for the student, or does it provide coding for retreiving old patterns in new combinations and for different events?

b. The use of contrasts in education

Minimizing the use of dichotomies and introducing genuine alternatives for cross-cultural perception, evaluation and performance.

c. Desired emotional investment and personal commitment in education and in performance.

d. "insular communication"

Is it instructive to consider training for communication taking place when differences exist within boundaries common to senders

and receivers which keep them in the field so to speak?

Methods Used in Education--General

Human relations, simulation, role playing, etc.

Methods Used in Language Instruction

4. Special Effects

a. Visual modalities--since the visual image is strongly dependent on past experience and knowledge, it must be particularly sensitive to cultural differences. As a contrast, learning a language involves adoption of the other system entirely since language as a code entails much more invariance than the image. It would seem that the "variance" of the image would be particularly useful in education in the field of intercultural communication serving as a projector for personal and cultural predispositions. The visual image is excellent for arousal, problematical for expression, but lacks statements without the expectations of the perceiver. With images, the disparity between the sender and the receiver is maximized: What is intended by the sender is only very generally an invariant derivation by the receiver. It is possible that various persons, and cultures as well, become specialists in certain aspects of visual messages since their invariance is small, and that the variance becomes diagnostic of the culture or the individual. These almost random comments support the contention that the visual modality has a special significance for intercultural communication.

b. Sojourn in another culture provides a background of difference--of fantasy and of imagination--which facilitates learning. Procedures in education could stress this principle by appeals to fantasy, visual images, etc.

5. Training Experiments in Intercultural Communication
   a. Results of the experiments: education, training
   b. Problem of control of two or more languages
6. Evaluation
7. Using the Mass Media

This is an important and interesting topic viewed from the point of view of definition of senders and receivers, and from the difficulty of analyzing exactly how changes are brought about in attitudes or behavior by the mass media.

B. Applications of Intercultural Communication: Persuasion and Influencing

This is a vast topic which will not be summarized here. Some of the important work is found with Hovland and colleagues on matters such as two sides of an argument; Heider's work; the area of dissonance theory and experimentation; the work of Sherif; attitudes of fear of manipulation; the effects of propaganda, and the factor of inferior status in susceptibility to efforts to influence. These topics barely scratch the surface and suggest some of the empirical areas which deserve to be examined in a thoroughgoing intercultural perspective.

C. Applications of Intercultural Communication: Conflict Reduction

There is the promise that intercultural communication can contribute to conflict reduction. It may be compared to social efforts to reduce conflict or to efforts to establish personal meaning such as sensitivity training and psychotherapy.

IV. Theoretical Summary

Much of the impetus behind the Outline has been an intent to examine the field of intercultural communication to determine its unique contribution, if any, to the field of communication. For purposes of directness and simplicity, the theoretical underpinnings of the entire effort were kept to a minimum in Section I. To attain the original purpose of the Outline, a thorough and systematic examination of basic concepts in intercultural communication seems necessary. This final section is intended to serve as a summary of topics which should appear in the body of the Outline. Some topics, which should be of particular interest, are mentioned below; an entire theoretical summary is not given.

A. Communication and the Principle of Similarity

Summary of the conclusions reached with respect to:

1. Necessary similarities of sender and receiver
2. The similarity basis of the concept of information
3. Consideration of two dimensions of time and space with respect to implications for communication
   a. Repetition and sequences in time ("diachronic")
   b. Symmetry and redundancy in space ("synchronic")
   c. Order and pattern: repetition as structure, as controlled redundancy

B. Communication and the Principle of Difference

1. Randomness and choice as referents for differences
   a. What is the relevance of entropy and other concepts from the field of information theory for metatheory in intercultural communication?
   b. Epistomology of choice

      Is choice metatheory or not?

This powerful concept and its first kin, preference, lie outside ordinary causal systems. Their consideration raises the question of cause and effect in communication theory which introduces one of the least understood and yet most important problems in communication: the relationship, including the causal one, between content of a message, its effect on the receivers predispositions (attitudes, values, etc.) and its effect on behavior. The examination of choice and preference as favorite underpinnings of American psychology introduces a concept with a thread running through the sections of the outline. This thread begins with the source of behavior, the provenance, buried in the agent of choice or preference. Thus there is a necessary stress on qualities of the agent as the origin of his actions. The thread from section to section would provide the following sequence of topics: (1) epistomology of choice, and choice as difference; (2) theory of choice in communication; (3) stress on certain functions of communication such as referential, and cultural differences regarding the sources of behavior; (4) specific effects attained by intercultural communication, i.e., sender functioning on the basis of choice, but receiver on the basis of role; (5) personal involvement of student in training.

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